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## Discovering a new elitism in the garden of Eden



has found an inter-Lesting gap in the market and is launching a new chain of adults-only health clubs, called Eden.

Now I know what sort of image the phrase "adults only" usually conjures up, especially when used in conjunction with the words "sauna" and "relaxation rooms", but really, there's nothing seedy about this. It'll be too costly, for a start.

The best thing about this whole concept is that Esporta

ere's an intriguing makes no bones about the fact that found in "a country house studios, including one for Pi- has somewhere to look after new idea. Esporta that it's going to be luxurious, hotel". You will be greeted by lates, a nice pool and sauna, the children — mine has a big exclusive and expensive. In fact, you can put the word "very" before all of those adjectives.

> Patrick Henchoz, managing director of Esporta, quite unashamedly says: "We are focusing on the most affluent sectors within society, reaching the largely untapped adult only, premium end of the market."

Very nice. And for your money, you'll get restaurants, bars, facilities for pampering and so on, in an atmosphere akin to

David Powell reports on a fitness competition that is open to all

name as you come in and as there will only be a limited membership, you don't have to worry about not getting a

Sounds good, eh? Can't you just picture yourself lounging about in a robe on the sun terrace, sipping a fruity cocktail and not feeling guilty about not having actually done any exercise because, as the promotional info says, "the emphasis is not on fitness". There will be a gym though, and exercise

and yet...

den is aiming at the over-30 age group, but it is making big play of the fact that it will be a child-free environment. So what sort of clientele will go? People without children, presumably, and people who have someone to look after their children while they come to the health club.

It's a big draw, a child-free habitat, but then if your club crèche and activity area — then it's the best of both worlds (until they go rampaging through

the restaurant, that is). My first thought about Eden that was that it would be horribly elitist and somewhat maleorientated. But then I thought of the Sanctuary, a women's spa in central London which is run along the same sort of lines — a wonderful mixture of fitness club and relaxation haven, so maybe Esporta is on to a good thing with Eden.

you are treated like a friend and a valued one at that would make a nice change from many of the health clubs these days, which see you as

just a direct debit. A colleague in the office grew up in a culture where this idea of a country club where people went not just to keep fit, but mainly to socialise was hugely prevalent, so maybe we are just taking our time catching up. We'll certainly need

some time to save up. catherine.riley@the-times.co.uk

#### Sidis

Your active new year does not have to be put on hold until the weather turns more temperate. If you live in the capital, Maximise sports adventure club has a yearlong schedule of activity-based weekend events. Ice skating, bowling, hang-gliding, indoor climbing, fencing, horse riding and husky racing are among the outings planned for the first few months of the year. Call 0181-440 8814 for details.

Gilda Marx has launched their spring/summer collection of sportswear, which again utilises their popular sweat-wicking material. Along with the staple black, white and grey shades, the company is also introducing berry and aqua into its colour range on workout gear from vests with spaghetti straps to gilets and Capri pants. The new collection can be found at leading sports and department stores nationwide. Telephone 01628 536408 for details.

The London School of Capoeira is running introductory courses on this Brazilian-dance type exercise from now until April. Fighting techniques using the feet and legs are combined with dance routines that demand and develop considerable stamina. For information, telephone the school on 0171-281 2020.

Adventure walking has been added to the itinerary of holidaymakers who mix wholesomeness with pleasure when taking a break with Yoga Plus. To supplement the average day on a week's holiday in Crete that could include tai chi, yoga, Pilates, swimming, salsa and nutrition courses, the deepest ravines, caves and Venetian forts will also be explored. For information on the holidays, which run from April to October, see www.yogaplus.co. uk or telephone 01273 276175. A supplement rich in natural fruit acid may help those trying to avoid over-eating in winter. The stodgy foods craved in cold weather have been blamed for unwanted added inches by the 89 per cent of women who eat more at this time of year. NatraShape, which contains hydroxycitric acid, helps by stimulating the production of natural blood sugars which tell the body when it is full. A month's supply costs £14.95 from health food shops or call 0870 849 9950 for more details. The existence of comfort foods has been long-known to chocolate overindulgers, but a more scientific approach to their understanding begins next year. A series of workshops entitled the Mood and Food Project, funded by the mental-health charity Mind and the Millennium Commission, will investigate the link between food and depression as well as focusing on allergies, blood-sugar levels and the impact of cravings and addictions on wellbeing. For more information on the workshops, at which nutritionists will be present to answer questions, write to: Food and Mood, Natural

I'VE suffered from plantar leases blood that then calcifies fascitis in my left foot since June last year and despite having a steroid injection three months ago, the pain is still fairly intense when I walk or stand. I bought heel pads from an osteopath, whom I no longer see, but they don't help. My doctor says the condition will eventually clear up, but I hate having such limited mobility and am afraid of becoming unfit. Is there anything more I can do to help the condition to heal and what physical activity might I be safe to pursue? Chris Sharp, executive direc-

Health Foods, 94 St James's

Items for Shorts should be sent

to: Fitness Editor, The Times, 1

Pennington Street, London E1

Street, Brighton BN2 1TP.

9XN. Fax: 0171-782 5211.

tor of the Footbed Clinic, says your condition is an inflammation of the tendon that runs from the forefoot, through the arch and attaches to the underside of the heel and has long been thought to be caused by the foot impacting with the ground. However, studies in bowls clubs in Australia, where incidence was high, showed the main cause was an over-pronation of the foot. As the foot rolls in it hyper-

extends, pulling the tendon

away from the bone which re-

at the end of the tendon. Commonly known as a heel spur, the pain is described as like a hot knife stabbed in the heel.

t was Tony Banks who

said it, though it sounded

more like a gibe from the

Opposition. "One of the

reasons I came here is that it

keeps me out of the National

Health Service," Banks, La-

bour's former Minister for

Sport, said. "Not a bad idea at

the moment, because there is

There has been no hiding

place for the Prime Minister

over Labour's management of

the NHS, not even cover from

the man who is now his spe-

cial envoy for the 2006 football

World Cup campaign. How

much worse, though, might

the strain be on doctors and

hospitals if so many of the pop-

launch of the second annual X

Centre in Marylebone, Lon-

don. Treadmills to his right,

shoulder presses to his left,

rowing machines ahead of

him — Banks was on a visit to

testosterone city. "The X Zone

gives you the incentive to get

The X Zone is dumbbelling

down, shaking off its tag of elit-

ism and targeting the masses.

In its inaugural year, it was

billed as a competition to find

Britain's fittest man and wom-

an, won by Hywel Davies, a

gymnasium die-hard, and Sa-

rah Coope, six times a Europe-

an triathlon champion. This

year, nobody need feel daunt-

ed about having a go.

tive," he said.

Banks was speaking at the

ulation were not keeping fit?

not much room in it."

The problem is a common one that builds up over time and a steroid injection, while masking pain, does not stop the foot rotating and can allow the condition to worsen.

To correct it, the foot needs to be held in a neutral position, for which you should ideally be prescribed orthotics by a podiatrist and wear support or stability shoes. Be warned, however, that during the first two weeks of wearing orthotics the pain can feel worse as the calcified blood is dis-

The condition will never be healed, but so long as you are wearing the correct support for your feet, there is no reason why you should not, in time, return to exercise.

I am hoping to run the Flora London Marathon again people seeing you (will they next year in fancy dress, including a wig. Last year, I be- run at a time when few are came so hot I had to carry the about. Sunday morning at wig for the final hour and 5.30 is a good starting time.



The British athletics trio of Devonish, Dwain Chambers and Mark Richardson are spearheading the X Zone challenge. Photograph: Sinead Lynch

# The challenge of getting into a zone

By the climax in May, organisers hope to have convinced hundreds, if not thousands, of people of the joys and benefits of gym training. It is a threetier challenge, incorporating five disciplines: running, rowing, cycling, step-climbing,

and press-ups. Certificates are awarded to those attaining X Zone time goals. A man running two kilometres, rowing 750 metres, cy-

Zone at the Seymour Leisure cling 2,500 mefloors and doing 25 minutes passes the intermediate test. For a fit, knowing there is an objecworkout

must be achieved in 27 minutes 30 seconds. The blue time goal is 20 minutes for men, 22 for women, embracing a lkm run or walk, 500m row, 1,500m cycle, 15 floors and 10 press-ups.

Black, which opens the gates to qualifying for the Britain's fittest man and woman finals at RAF Cosford in May, has been set at 30 minutes for men, 33 for women. The course covers a 2,500m run,

was wondering if there is a

way of preparing for the dis-

comfort? Training while

wearing a wig is somewhat

bleak as you imagine, accord-

ing to Steven Seaton, editor of

Runner's World. The best way

to train for running in fancy

dress is to run in fancy dress,

and if you are worried about

recognise you anyway?) then

Your situation is not as

embarrassing.

1,500m row, 3km ride, 30

floors and 40 press-ups. "X Zone 2000 is a great thing to do," Marlon Devonish, the European and Commonwealth sprint relay goldmedal winner, said. 'The three-tier system works for everybody of all ages and you can get into it gradually. It is a great strategy, a brilliant idea well constructed. The other

thing I like about it is that you

'The three-tier zone system works for

people of all ages and fitness levels'

can go on to the Internet and

see how your friends are do-

For the £25 entry fee, partici-

pants can record on the Inter-

net an unlimited number of

performances for the X Zone

national rankings. Each one,

though, must be checked and

approved by a registered club

fitness instructor. The top 400

who pass the black zone test

by the end of March will be in-

casebook

If two or more of you are

training in equally ridiculous

garb, you will feel less self-

conscious, so find some like-

minded running partners. If

you still refuse to practise in a

wig and costume, wear a few

horsehair shirts or sweatshirts

and at least two woolly hats to

Alternatively, although ex-

pensive, you could buy your

own treadmill on which you

could run when you want and

wearing what you want. Or en-

ter one of the pre-London Mar-

athon half-marathons, such as

get used to the discomfort.

vited to the finals.

zone winner — is on offer. Last year, 12 professional sports teams entered, including Bath rugby

These will take the form of a

ten-event challenge, including

a step climb to a height equiva-

lent to the Blackpool Tower, a

20m rope climb, plus riding,

rowing, running, and chins,

dips and bicep lifts. Heats will

be held on Saturday, May 20,

finals the next day. Modest

prize-money — £750 to each

of the England squash team and Frank Warren's stable.

All were annihilated by the women's rowing five. World Class Performance, which administers National Lottery funding for sport, will be helping to assemble the field for a similar challenge this year.

Endorsed by the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) and supported by the Cannons chain of health clubs through Courtney's, the X Zone is a commercial event run by the

Wilmslow, where turning up

the start-line having not run a

step in your costume, make

sure that you take precautions

on the day: start slowly, carry

your own water/juice bottle,

drink heartily at every oppor-

tunity and try periodically to

take your wig off to cool down.

while sweating and itching

during the race, spare a

thought for the pair trying to

break the record for running

I'm 22 and enjoy keeping fit,

but my exercise is currently

limited to the same 25-minute

run followed by a few

weights which I do fairly ir-

regularly — sometimes every

day and other times just once

a week. I would like a varied

regime which works all parts

of the body with the correct

breaks in between each exer-

cise. Can you suggest any

It sounds as though you are

in a rut, says Richard

Grainger, of Peak Perform-

such plan?

as a pantomime horse.

If you feel sorry for yourself

If all else fails and you toe

in fancy dress is encouraged.

Esprit Group. However, there are two charities, Sparks and SportsAid, which will be beneficiaries of the challenge. Their common objective is to see children lead fitter, healthier and more active lives.

"Participants are encouraged to seek sponsorship for their challenge," Alex Johns, event director for Esprit, said. Johns's objective is to see the X Zone become the largest massparticipation fitness competition in Britain. Esprit already organises Britain's biggest triathlon, the London Triathlon.

"The FIA has 830 member sites across the country. Last year, we aimed at the top three per cent of the health club membership. This year we hope that 80 per cent will give it a try. We believe it is the first time that an event like this has been interactive."

Claire Kendrick, commercial manager for Courtney's, said: "We are looking to involve about 1,500 people across our 15 sites and to get 40 or 50 to the final. We will be helping to train them up and there is a good chance one of them might be the fittest man

or woman in Britain." So the challenge is on. If your body shape is more Fatzone than Boyzone, the X Zone is your way forward. Help to keep yourself clear of the NHS queue zone.

For more information, or to enter the X Zone challenge, telephone: 0171-928 5055 or see www.thexzone.org.

whichever ways you alter your

programme to maintain gener-

al fitness, you must exercise

three to four times a week

working your cardiovascular

heart-rate for 20-30 minutes,

pushing yourself hard at short

intervals. You should also

ance or weights two or three

times per week, giving the mus-

Do 15 repetitions for muscu-

lar endurance and 8-10 for

strength. If time is short, do at

least one set for the muscles in

the back, arms, legs and stom-

ach with an appropriately

that works all muscle groups

cuit training or body condition-

comprises 30 minutes cardio-

utes resistance work with

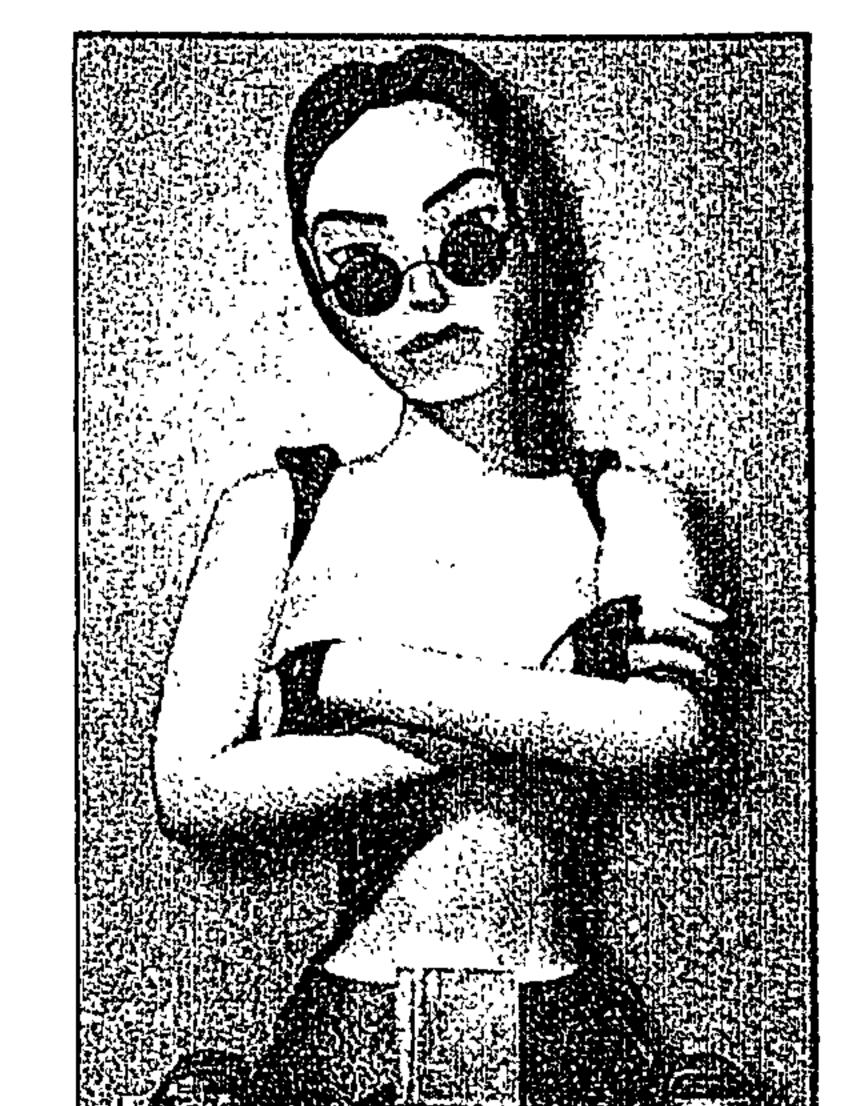
ing-type classes.

staleness and injury.

cles 48 hours to recover.

work your muscles with resist-

### Watthew Pryor shapes up with...



### LARA CROFF

YOU'RE an international sex symbol — could you ever go

It takes all sorts and so far as I'm concerned, size should certainly not be an issue when it comes to a regular relationship. I'm an interactive kind of girl and if I led a normal life the size of my partner would be immaterial, provided they

Unfortunately, as things are, if anybody wants to stay by my side for any length of time, there has to be a high degree of physical fitness. Extra levels of insulation would cercolder climates I sometimes visit, but body weight has to be carefully balanced for optimal

raiding tombs as a delicate balance between aerial gymnastics and frontline assault, but it can throw up any number of those in Reading, Hastings or ance Personal Training. In eventualities; from kayaking down raging white-waters to encountering a hungry T-Rex, so I like to keep my activities

fairly diverse. My real high-end fitness is system at between 65 and 80 | only attainable through proper cent of your maximum | longed adventuring, so my home workout is actually comparatively restful. Basic everyday training involves vaulting, tumbling, running, swimming, climbing and target practice. I found it rather difficult to cover this sort of variation at the local leisure centre, so I've converted part of my mansion into a gym and as-

> As far as the diet goes, it can be quite difficult to keep track while adventuring. Among ticipate in the indulgence of local delicacies — smoked igua-

No, very few wore crowns. Still, I think I've made a mark on English history in my own special way. Like me, I think

one with a real passion for architecture — although my interest lies more with ancient sites than modern structures. Nobody seems to be prepared to take the trouble to include mazes, traps and puzzles in today's architecture, which renders it of little interest to

Did they used to call you pixel

Are there any little Laras on the horizon?

I've yet to find a tomb with enough decent ramps inside to enable me to push a pram tainly be beneficial for the about comfortably. And I don't think a small child would squeeze into my backpack particularly well. So probably not, no. It's a mod-

ern trend. After another hard day fighting morgue beetles and saving the world, you're very hungry. You pass a kebab tomb on your left. Do you

It may take a while, but I'd rather locate a medi-pack to replenish my energy — far more balanced. The energy required to simply digest the various components of a kebab would leave me back at square one...

Were your parents fanatics? Sadly, I'm estranged from my parents. It all started when I survived a plane crash in the Himalayas and realised that I was only truly happy when

OCCUPATION

International

Tomb Raider

HEIGHT

5ft 9in

WEIGHT

52kg (8st 3lb)

alone and in an VITALISTICS adventurous situation. Bringing Sunday

roast home from the local woods was really the last straw for them, but I'd rather not discuss it, if you don't mind. You're doing

some low intensity work in a mountain vil-

lage, when you see someone you want to impress, do you strut your stuff or stick to the programme?

Unfortunately, most of the people I meet want to shoot me, so there would be no point at all in giving them a gymnastic display or showing them my collection of weaponry. When you've had goons ogling you through their cross-hairs all day, any other kind of attention really becomes immaterial. And to tell you the truth, I think it would be pretty hard to impress when you've been sleeping in smelly caves and haven't had a shower for days. Your favourite body part?

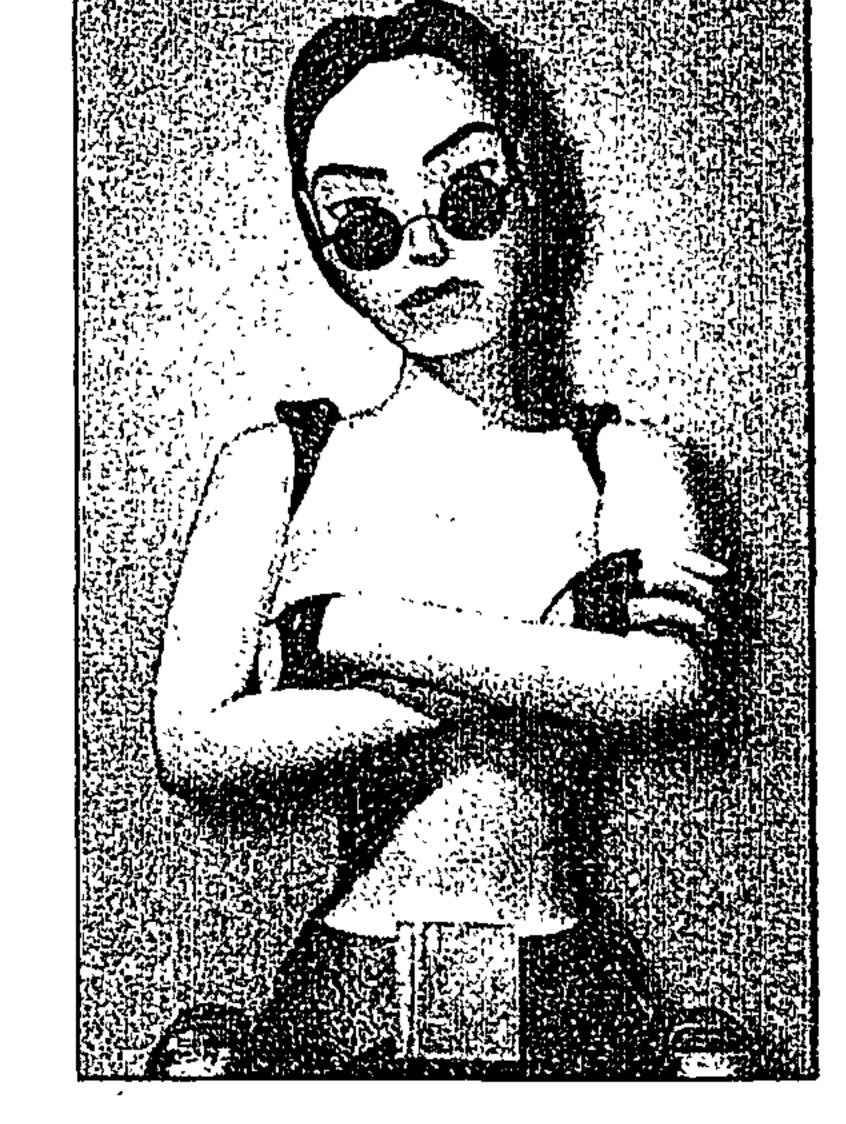
My mind. It's always helped me to keep one step ahead of my enemies. However, I'm aware that other people appreciate the finer points of my anatomy. My least favourite used to be my hands, since I could only open doors if there were large levers or keys involved. That's all changed now, so I guess I'd have to say my legs — they have a tendency to break every time I fall from too great a height.

Proper preparation before a big tomb raid is important. Sex before adventure or adventure before sex?

Some say my adventures are better than sex — they cer-

Next week: Paula Radcliffe

e-mail your casebook questions to jennal cox@the-times.co.uk or post to The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN



out with a fat bloke?

were good company.

strength, endurance and flexi-

bility in all situations. Some people say you're just the product of an over-active imagination. Who's more real; you, the Spice Girls or

Pamela Anderson? Not real? Then why are you talking to me? Thankfully, unlike Pamela Anderson I don't require surgery to enhance my finer points. I rely on my own personal designers to define my polygons — it's a short and painless process. My textures won't fade and my polygons won't sag — I'm designed for life. The Spice Girls are certainly dynamic, but I don't know if they have the staying power to match my own! And

no, words don't hurt though a few stray bullets and dinosaurs have in the past.

How do you achieve that awesome definition? My basic training is designed

to keep me sufficiently fit and agile to be able to embark on an adventure at a mo-

ment's notice. I like to think of

sault course. heavy weight, or for a regime tribes in far-flung places, it with correct rest times try cir- | isn't uncommon to have to par-If you are a member of a | na, toad bladder, crocodile tongym, make sure your workout | sils... By the time I get home, I'm usually dying for a plate of vascular and at least 15 minbeans on toast.

Were all the boys at Gordonstoun like Prince Charles?

stretching before and after. Make sure your workout is enjoyable and variable to avoid Prince Charles was the only

tainly last longer...

reflections the contraction of the restriction of the contraction of t matthew.pryor@the-times.co.uk